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Jordan bans partially hydrogenated oil in dairy products

Report Categories:

Dairy and Products

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Report Highlights:

The Jordan Food and Drug Administration is banning the use of partially hydrogenated oils in dairy products. The measure was implemented on June 2, 2016 following media coverage and public debate on the issue. By the end of 2016 domestic production and imports of these products will be eliminated. Partially hydrogenated oils are known to be a major source of trans-fats and some studies show that they may have negative impacts on human health.

General Information:

Jordan will completely ban the use of hydrogenated oils in dairy products by 2017. A recent decree by the Jordanian Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) requires that only animal fat occurring naturally in dairy products be permitted in milk and cheese. The ban on hydrogenated oils will apply only to dairy products, which are considered a staple of the Jordanian diet. Processed dairy products containing hydrogenated oils will no longer be produced in, or imported to, Jordan. These oils can still be used in the production of chips, chocolate and other products. The new measure was implemented on June 2, 2016.

The ban is based on JFDA standards 185/2009, 246/2006 and 393/2012, as well as the new decree published in the official gazette (No. 5394) on May 2, 2016. This measure replaced the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISMO) standards 1605/2004 and 1520/2004, which previously regulated the use of partially hydrogenated oils.

The debate on partially hydrogenated fats was sparked by a television talk show earlier this year. The program noted the danger of using the hydrogenated fats in processed cheese. Subsequently, both the JISM and JFDA rushed to implement new regulations corresponding to the US FDA and World Food Summit recommendations. A study on the side effects of trans-fats was presented at the World Food Summit in Rome in 2015. The study showed that partially hydrogenated oils were the most important dietary source of industrial produced trans-fat. Furthermore, the study noted that these substances have serious consequences for human health, specifically cardiovascular health.

Following the May 2nd decision, the JFDA informed local dairy manufacturers of the decision to ban the oils. Jordanian manufacturers of processed dairy products were not allowed to import the partially hydrogenated oil as of May 2nd. Importers of food products fiercely opposed the ban noting their contractual obligations with foreign suppliers. Faced with commercial realities, JFDA extended a grace period until December 31st for those firms that can demonstrate preexisting contracts for the banned product. As of January 1, 2017 the ban will be final for all importers and dairy manufacturers.

In spite of the ban on partially hydrogenated oils used in dairy products, the oils can still be used in the production of chips, chocolate and some other products. Dairy is considered a staple of the Jordanian diet and is treated as a sensitive product.

US cheese exports to Jordan grew from zero to US \$5 million from 2010 to 2015. Exports are expected to nearly double to US \$10 million in 2016. US producers who export to Jordan are strongly encouraged to label their dairy products as containing *no trans-fats*. If the label or ingredients have any percentage of vegetable oil, Jordanian customs authorities will potentially reject the shipment.